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Early Moravian contribution  
to Liberal education in Eastern  
Pennsylvania.

J. Taylor Hamilton.

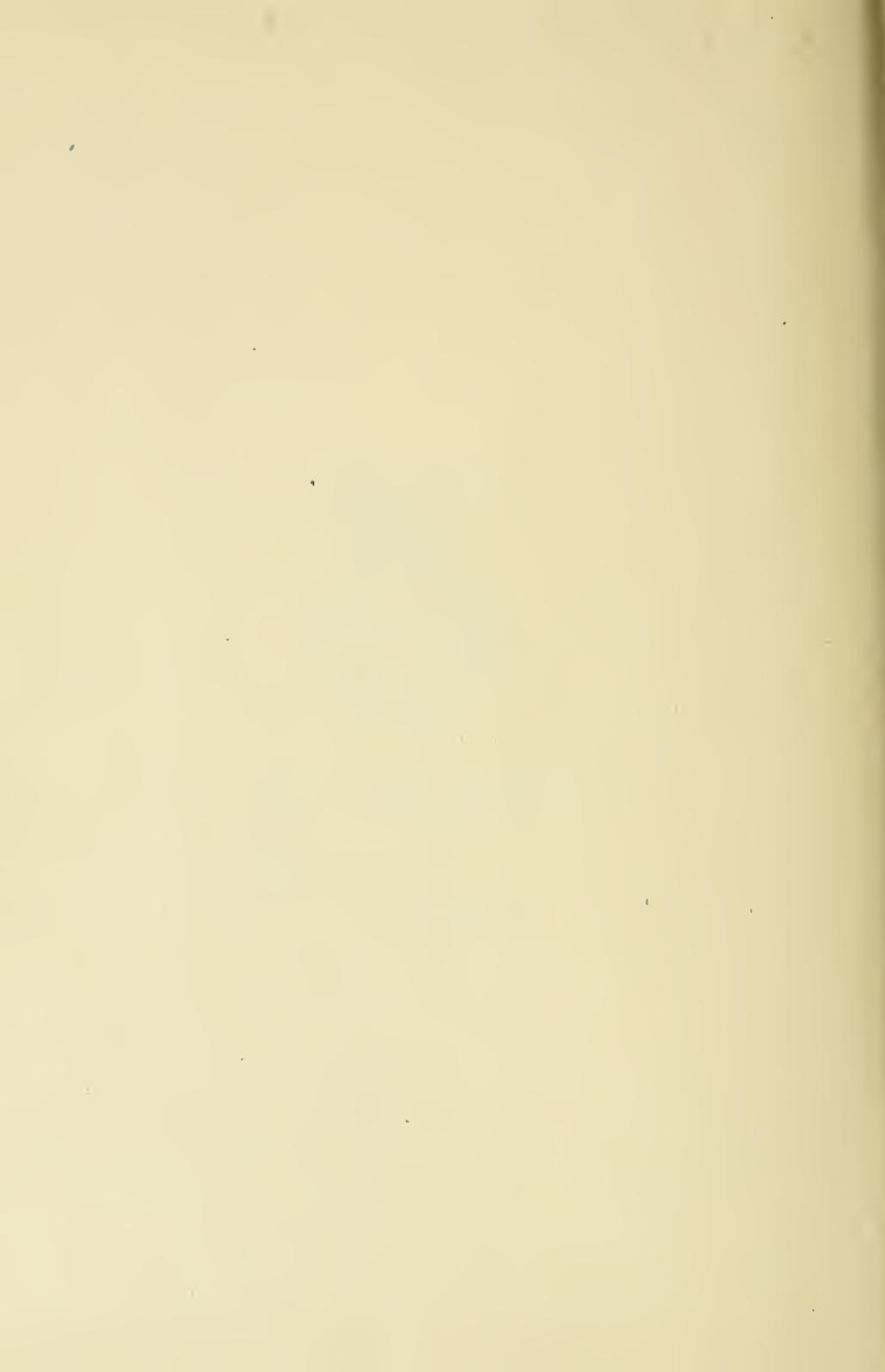


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*W. J. Taylor*

The Early Moravian Contribution to Liberal  
Education in Eastern Pennsylvania.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT

LAFAYETTE COLLEGE

ON

Founder's Day, October 23, 1901.

BY

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Professor in the Moravian College and Theological  
Seminary at Bethlehem, Pa.

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## The Early Moravian Contribution to Liberal Education in Eastern Pennsylvania.

*Ladies and Gentlemen :*

President Warfield's expressed preference is my apology for speaking to a theme otherwise open to stricture here and now. As it is, I confess embarrassment ; for the successors of Robert Traill, the Scotch master, have far outrun those who received their torch from the Moravian schoolman, George Neisser. Yet your President's suggestion hints at possible interest derivable from tracing one of the many threads gathered into the web and woof of our present culture. I pluck up courage also, when I remember that many bonds unite our two chief towns in the Forks of the Delaware. The paths of your Brainerd and of our Mack and Zeisberger crossed under primeval beech and spruce and chestnut trees. The "god-father" of this county-seat, William Parsons, was the Moravians' friend. When your public men projected this college in 1824, Pulaski's banner, carried in one of the great processions in honor of Lafayette, a banner embroidered by our sisters, may have reminded him of tender care at the hands of those sisters after the defeat on the Brandywine. Surely it is, therefore, permissible for us of Bethlehem to hail your now venerable institution with our *Vivat, crescat, floreat academia*. And appreciating, as I do, the honor of being asked to speak to-day, I am sure I may count on an indulgent hearing for the tale of Moravian efforts in education long ago.

Daniel Martin was just setting in order his canoe ferry here at the Point, when our Spangenberg wrote the Skippack to Count Zinzendorf in Europe that the

educational needs of the colony were very great. In 1739 the smoke of Indian camps still curled up from the bushes fringing the Delaware and the Lehigh, and their waters teemed with rock-bass and shad. A foretaste of future insecurity of tenure the Monseys and Delawares had received through the "Walking Purchase." But this whole region was sparsely settled by whites. Perhaps there were not more than three hundred thousand in the colony. In the Minnisinks they were battling with the Wilderness. Even to the South "The Log College on the Neshaminy" had reached only its teens. It was the day of beginnings. In Spangenberg's language there was "almost no one who made the youth his concern."

Now, for several reasons, it was natural that the report of this consecrated pioneer, who had been sent to spy out the religious and moral requirements of Pennsylvania, met a sympathetic response in regard to school matters.

Modern pedagogy recognizes that a revolution in educational conceptions was wrought by Amos Comenius, a Moravian bishop, at this time dead about seventy years. He stood for universal education. He postulated that every man and every woman also is entitled to the best education possible in virtue of inherent humanity. From education all ranks and conditions should gain vigor of intellect and soundness of judgment, by it have tastes cultured, and through it receive information needful for happiness and usefulness. Step by step, and at first by object teaching, each should be brought to feel thoroughly at home in the world, finding none of its interests foreign to him, so as to be fitted to contribute his part to the common advantage, the while he himself is prepared for eternal happiness in accordance with the will of God.

When the awful Thirty Years' War was sweeping Central Europe like a series of tornadoes, these were

new notions. Men on the heights, who saw above and beyond the sulphur smoke in the valleys of strife, desired the services of Comenius for England, for France, for Sweden, yes, even for New England. Some of us now think it was a pity he did not close in with the overtures of Governor Winthrop, respecting the presidency of Harvard. As it was, his intense literary activity—he wrote more than one hundred works, many of them educational—left permanent effects in the improvement of scholastic methods.

Now Comenius had drafted his first scheme of educational reform while rector of the church-school at Fulneck, in that very region of Moravia where George Neisser, Bethlehem's first schoolmaster, was born. I am not ready to affirm, that when Neisser took his stand behind the desk in 1742, he had a clear and complete apprehension of the Comenian principles. But one can not peruse manuscripts which he has left, and avoid the conviction that in him vital traditions of what was best in the church of his forefathers survived, even though the rack, the knout, and the stake of the Counter-Reformation had destroyed its organic life.

But the educational ideal of the Moravian pioneers in colonial Pennsylvania was powerfully affected by another influence, the pietistic, through Count Zinzendorf. This student of Halle and Wittenberg, sent to America — and for a time personally shared their work — men like Spangenberg and Peter Böhler of Jena, and Pyrlaeus of Leipzig, now identified with the Moravians. He and they knew the value of liberal culture. He had sought to found a college in Lusatia dominated by the religious spirit. He had helped to equip a normal school in the Baltic Provinces. Wherever he and the Moravians went, schools were founded—in Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Denmark, Britain, and Ireland—to contribute later to the making of a Schleiermacher, a Novalis, a Montgomery, an Asquith.

Naturally, when Zinzendorf visited Pennsylvania in 1742, his plans included schools. In Germantown he inaugurated a school for girls, where his daughter, Countess Benigna, taught for a time. Removed to Bethlehem in June of that year, after sundry migrations, this school has remained there since 1749. From its halls, more than eight thousand young women have stepped forth into active life. A school for boys was founded at Nazareth in 1743, but was, two years later, transferred to Frederick Township, in Montgomery County. There were schools at Oley, near Reading, at Germantown, at Heidelberg, at Tulpehocken, at York. In fact, during the next years fifteen schools of various grades were maintained by the Moravians in Pennsylvania. Whitefield inspected and admired at least one of them during his visit in 1746. Circumstances hindered the permanence of most.

When Braddock's defeat opened the flood-gates, and the back-country beyond the Blue Mountains was deluged with savagery, the incipient towns received hundreds of refugees from desolated homes. Life ran in abnormal channels. Schools ceased in the open country. Their missions among the Indians now exposed the Moravians to misjudgment. Dazed by the cruelties of savage border raids the colonists could scarcely make distinctions between Indians and Indians, painted pagans and industrious peace-loving converts. By drum-beat, mass-meetings assembled to plan the destruction of those who were known as the Indians' friends. When happy in the proud splendor of a cocked hat and a military coat of broadcloth, gloriously gleaming with gold lace, the renegade Teedyuscung met the governors of adjacent colonies here in Easton, Moravian missionaries interpreted and promoted the treaty, and their Frederick Post ventured with the olive-branch to wilds beyond the Ohio. But the hopes of peace were not realized. Friends might design a medal in honor of the con-

ference in Easton—on one side the head of King George II, on the other a citizen and an Indian seated beneath a tree, the former handing the latter a calumet of peace, with the sun in the zenith. Pontiac's conspiracy rekindled passions. Exasperated frontiersmen replied to the murder of exposed settlers by massacring friendly Conestogas, and again the Moravians were placed in an unenviable position of unpopularity. Scarcely had these storms subsided, when premonitory thunders of the great life and death struggle of the colonies rumbled in the distance. When ordinary business was unsettled by war, schools could not thrive. Thus apart from parochial schools in their settlements, most of the Moravian schools here came to an end.

Yet just in this critical time, a stone building at Nazareth, of spacious proportions for 1759, was dedicated to the education of boys. Here at Nazareth Hall, the Rev. Francis Lembke, a former professor of the gymnasium at Strasburg, since 1763 administered affairs, and was aided by instructors from abroad. More than one hundred pupils were enrolled. But the war closed the doors of this school in 1779. Yet soon after peace was concluded it enjoyed a new springtime, and under the Rev. Charles Gotthold Reichel, at the close of the century, drew patronage from points as far apart as Montreal and Savannah, and enjoyed wide reputation throughout Pennsylvania and New York. During the closing decade of the century, Bethlehem Seminary, under the Rev. Jacob Van Vleck, prospered exceedingly, being not merely compelled to decline applicants for admission, but in 1797 had a list of such, so extensive that no more applications could be registered for a year and a half to come. A grand-niece of President Washington, daughters of Generals Greene and Butler, and the daughters of families like the Bleekers and Lansings of Albany, the Livingstones, Lawrences, and

Roosevelts of New York, the Alstons and Hugers of South Carolina, and the Lees of Virginia testified to the national reputation of the school.

It might be pleasant to speak of persons distinguished in after-life, who received their first equipment in these schools. We should note how Nazareth sent men to battle on either side of the great conflict more than a generation ago—men like Stephen R. Mallory and Generals Andrew A. Humphreys, Nathaniel Michler, and General McIntosh; and the names of McCalla, the hero of Tientsin, and of Mr. Cortelyou, our lamented President McKinley's invaluable secretary, would hint of the honorable record since the Civil War. But this would carry me beyond the scope of my task. Moreover, the greatest contribution of these schools to the educational cause has been that they have stood for an ideal, and championed a just conception of education.

Nor do the set limits of my theme permit me to refer to other Moravian schools founded since the close of the eighteenth century.

He who subjects to scrutiny the curricula of the schools we have been considering at the period beyond which we do not propose to pass, should remember that text-books were rare. The instructor's personality counted for everything. The accessories of the modern classroom were mainly lacking. Nevertheless, special attention was paid to English, French, and German. Mathematics, astronomy, and natural history found their place aside more elementary branches. At Nazareth, Latin and Greek were read. Instrumental and vocal music, and drawing contributed pleasant accomplishments. The Bethlehem spinning, needlework, and embroidery were famous, fitting young women for home life. Walks, and other forms of physical exercise developed the body. Unobtrusively, and in a way free from sectarian bias, religious instruction was imparted as a matter of course.

In the light of modern educational development, defects and crudities will be discovered; but here were the essentials of a liberal education.

Like Comenius, these educators, at the close of the eighteenth century, aimed to discover and develop native gifts. They would furnish with resources that constitute a permanent acquisition and brighten every situation. They tried to refine, to enlarge sympathies, fit for good citizenship, and render more easy the attainment of the birthright of a child of God. And in it all they were right, and planned in advance of their times. For in education the growth of every faculty should be coordinated. *Mens sana in corpore sano* is an ancient aphorism; but we are only to-day beginning to find acceptance for the truth that increasing spiritual power should keep pace with growing intellectual force.

Education without religion may fashion a Titan wily as Mephistopheles with the instincts of Caliban, a menace to the State, the atheist whose activities issue in anarchy. With it all the scholar, whose conscience and heart suffer atrophy, thirsts and is not satisfied. One of our best historians has stated his deliberate conclusion: "Let us follow knowledge to the outer circle of the universe—the eye will not be satisfied with seeing nor the ear with hearing. Knowledge is power and wealth is power, and harnessed to the chariot of the soul and guided by wisdom they may bear it through the circle of the stars; but left to their own guidance or reined by a fool's hand, the wild horses may bring the poor fool to Phaeton's end and set a world on fire." Yes, for us a liberal education must be a Christian education, the discipline of religion dominating the will, purifying motives, strengthening manhood, furnishing self-mastery and seating hope upon life's throne.

The early Moravian schools in Eastern Pennsylvania possessed special character by reason of the

educational conception and the educational method they exemplified. Let me invert the order in considering their demonstration of that which Comenius had championed.

As to method, close personal study of the individual pupil by the instructor should discern nature's indications, that instruction might be adapted to the capacity of each; for there is not a height to which a mind can not be led if you lead it one step at a time, and there is not a science that can not be mastered, if its essentials are understood in an order of progression.

An overgrown lad in Sir Edwin Arnold's school, near Birmingham, had once been almost given up by him as a hopeless blockhead. But one day a young girl who lived with the boy's mother came to plead for "Trotter", as they called him. "Indeed he was so good, if shy and slow." Then Arnold took "Trotter" in hand. He told the lad not to be ashamed. "King Ptolemy had boggled like himself at the Asses' Bridge, and had asked Euclid if he could not make it all a bit easier, to receive the reply, 'There is no royal road to learning.' 'But there is Trotter,' said Arnold, 'there is a very broad and good King's Highway, by means of which nothing is difficult, nothing abstruse. It is just as easy to learn the binomial theorem, or Sanskrit, or navigation, as it is to mow grass or shear a sheep. The secret is to be rightly taught or to teach yourself rightly from the beginning, making sure of every step taken.'" "Well with that," reports Arnold, "We built up Euclid for ourselves. We attacked that fatal fifth proposition; we surveyed it, and made colored sections of it; we worked out deductions and corollaries from it, until we had all sorts of supplementary propositions built over it and under it. And as he grasped the *raison d'être* of Euclid, his terrors changed to pleasure. The lad became the first demonstrator in the class. Well, that was one bridge. As I was crossing Canada," continues

Arnold, "many a year afterward, in the new and wonderful region between Vancouver and Winnipeg, we came upon an important ceremony, the opening of a most remarkable bridge, built over a most impetuous and unrestrainable river, and connecting in a manner most momentous for commerce and intercourse the sister States of a great Province. Having received a polite invitation to attend the inauguration, I repaired to the superintending engineer, in order to obtain some particulars of time and place. Inquiring at the door, I was told that he was for the moment out, but his wife, whose name I did not catch, would see me. Looking around on the walls, I spied to my astonishment, among pictures of various kinds, a photographic view of King Edward's School, Birmingham, and close beside it—The Fifth Proposition of the First Book of Euclid, with the angles and triangles done in divers colors, and underneath it written, 'My First Bridge.' Near at hand was a superb picture of the new Canadian bridge, in all its glory of iron and timber, with the rushing, forest-born river, innocuously whirling ice-slabs beneath its wide arches; while in the corner I read, very neatly inscribed, 'His Second Bridge.' Just then then there came into the nicest, brightest matron, leading a handsome boy of ten by the hand. In an instant, after all these years, we recognized each other. She was the girl with the blue eyes who had placed before me Trotter's woe about Euclid; and Trotter—none other than the melancholy Trotter—was the great hero of the day, the triumphant engineer."

Arnold's was an illustration of the Comenian principle, the teacher studying his pupil, to lead him step by step from the concrete to the abstract, from facts to principles. In employing this method Moravian teachers hit upon an educational system which must be permanent, even if subject to modification as to details. It was significant, too, that they stood for a liberal culture for both sexes.

Education is to render one thoroughly at home in the world, to the end that recognizing opportunities he shall best serve his age. A teacher therefore has a double task; he must cause his students to know facts and to grasp principles; but he must also discipline the mind that is to know and use knowledge. At our great works up the Lehigh, you may see certain huge retorts wherein ore from hillsides near Santiago de Cuba with stertorous panting of blazing gases is transmuted into molten steel. These ingots of steel, subjected to various re-treatment, after being placed in sundry ovens and in huge hydraulic presses, will come forth as impenetrable armor for—let us say—a new *Maine*. Now ores from the Jaragua mines can be utilized for turrets only by being first converted into ductile yet toughened steel. So in the preparation for life. Time is gained, not lost, which is spent in creating mental power. In its place technical training is priceless. But back of and beneath assimilation of specific knowledge required for one craft or profession, a man must discipline himself. He must really know his own brain power, and by developing native capacity must gain the strength of reserve force.

Now in seeking to develop brain power, ability to reason and to clearly and forcefully express thought are the two faculties to which first attention must be paid. And experience, not ultraconservatism, has taught the value of two groups of studies as conjointly adapted to this end—the study of the classical languages and the study of mathematics. Complex, well developed, with a facility to convey all shades of thought discriminatingly, these languages afford a fine mental drill. The languages of modern civilization are germinant in them, even as modern literature is rooted in the survivals of their poetry and prose. When pedantry is avoided, and the genius, moral code and working philosophy

of the ancients are apprehended, these men are seen to be very modern, having anticipated many of the findings of latter day philosophy, and having exposed many of the fallacies that ever and again clamor for acceptance. The classical student therefore approaches modern thought from a point of vantage. As for mathematics and the family of associated studies, what collegian has not later learned to thank even implacable Euclid's grimmer algebraic progeny for an accretion of keen mental power!

The sarcasm of supposed superiority may lead some one to vaunt "the successful man who does not know a Greek root from a tulip bulb," but even that successful man would have been the better for discipline of the modern curriculum. For while the classics and mathematics still constitute the two foci, what a galaxy clusters around them! In general literature the student now goes far afield. History is so presented, that Cobden's jibe falls harmless, his sneer at the Ilissus as a winter torrent in summer dammed up for the benefit of Athenian laundresses, and carefully treasured in the mind of the young Oxonian, who has misty conceptions of the Ohio, the Mississippi and the Missouri. Optional electives are introducing men to the new sciences fundamental to modern occupations. Readjustment is everywhere in process. Nowhere is the collegian a dreamy doctrinaire.

With disciplined mastery of his powers, powers estimated at about their real value, having learnt to take his bearings, with ideals purified and stimulated, and with character somewhat solidified, the young graduate to-day has on his side reasonable expectations of success. The man with a liberal education is in the better position to do the world's work. A statesmanship from which knowledge of history has been excluded, is handicapped if it is

not essentially defective. A medical training lacking all knowledge of Latin, must remain somewhat empirical, and since medical terminology is largely of Greek origin, this language also is essential to the physician or surgeon. The architect that does not know the people whose buildings first combined beauty and strength, must be very liable to crudities. The lawyer devoid of liberal culture would be a living paradox. The engineer ignorant of dynamics must work by rule of thumb in a hit or miss way, and may sometimes miss fatally. Perhaps there are successful litterateurs, who never quaffed the spring of Helicon, yet after all the highest prizes are for the most thoroughly equipped. A clergyman may do vast good without his Westcott and Hort or his Tischendorf, and though he cannot tell a Daleth from a Resh; but the assurance of having "Thus saith the Lord" behind his message is more certainly his, when he reads the Holy Scriptures in the originals.

Far be it from me to claim a monopoly of worth for collegians. The saying is true, that "all humanity is the heir of science, and the communion of scholarship is an open communion." The father of modern transportation built his "Rocket" in virtue of no training in the theory of mechanism, but hard environment as a pit-boy from tender years stimulated inborn genius. When some Santos Dumont perfects aerial navigation, it may be recalled that a Montgolfier's conception of the balloon is said to have come from no treatise on aerostatics, but from a chance placing of a piece of paper on a coffee-pot, so that the steam distended it. The Tyrolese boy, who crushed mountain blossoms to get color for his amazing pictures on the side of his father's house, was Titian the artist before he studied under Bellini at Venice. Edison's wizard-like command of elementary lightning can be

claimed by no school. To Mahaffy's remarks in his treatise on Descartes every thinker will assent: "The intellectual kings of the world are like Melchizedek, 'without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life,' appearing suddenly, mysteriously, to bless the human race."

Nevertheless, as matters usually stand, the average man with mind trained by scholarly discipline occupies a point of vantage. The world wants men who know things and who can see how their knowledge may be best applied.

I am not surprised that a count of the eleven thousand five hundred names in the biographical lists of "Who's Who in America" confirms what we should expect *à priori*. It discloses the fact that 70 per cent. of those who have attained more than local prominence were college men.

Doubtless, educational methods will yet improve; but even now when tested by utilitarian tests, education pays. It is the highroad to success. After all, attainment is the disclosure of character; for power resides in personality, and education develops and refines personal force.

And by attainment I mean more than temporary gaining the end sought. Generally a first gaining of what was sought involves exposure to yet severer tests. Then woe to him who has dazzled with the glitter of mere plated ware. Loss of self-respect, if less tragic than that of Oedipus, yet scarcely less disheartening, accompanies such self-discovery. But there abides an incalculable reserve of satisfaction as the inalienable treasure of the rightly educated and thoroughly educated man. Recently I heard it stated that if you took a silver dollar worn by abrasion so nearly smooth that the stamp scarcely showed, and melted it, in melting the eagle would reappear, since the die struck through and affected

every particle of that coin. I can not affirm this. But I do know, that when the die of true culture has placed its firm mark upon a man, there is a something distinguishing him ineffaceably. He may not have success, as things are tested by their value "on Change." But he knows that a man's life consisteth neither in the abundance nor in the paucity of the things he possesseth. Culture has been a corrective of self-centered materialistic narrowness. His are resources that endure, and that add dignity to life in every state. He holds communion with the best in all ages. Honestly trying to fill his providential sphere, he remains fresh, aggressive, responsive to duty and honor, and sympathetically human. He has found and quaffed a truer fountain of immortal youth than that which Ponce de Leon vainly sought; for best of all, he knows, that he that doeth the will of God, abideth forever.

Will any question, then, whether it pays to found and endow institutions for such a fashioning of men? As the years pass, the wisdom of Mr. Pardee and Mr. Blair and others who have devised liberally for this honored institution will be more and more clear, the while their memory is revered.

Early last Saturday I was privileged to climb the observatory anchored to the crag known as Eagle Cliff at beautiful Mohonk. Mile after mile of sweeping lines of mountain top touched by the sun lay spread to view in the russet of mellow October. Minnewaska gleamed on a sister height. Far off to the North, rose the rugged piles of the Catskills. But on either side a light blue mist beneath me veiled the valleys of the Rondout and the Wallkill. Yet I knew what beauty to expect when the king of day had asserted his royalty. The pastoral thrift of the sons of the Huguenots, that has endowed those valleys with garden-like fertility, had become familiar in the past. The mist could not wholly

hide, where memory might picture. To assert that we live in a momentous age may be to utter a platitude as stale as it is trite. Yet never did the saying involve more naked truth. We stand on a mountain top of achievement and of crisis. Mists veil the future, and wholly shut it from our vision. That mighty economic and social problems confront our national life and demand solution, we know. Dependent races are looking to us for direction in their development. Occident fatefully touches Orient. America has entered upon new relations to the world. What the outcome of it all shall be, it were vain to prophesy. But this I do know: Gentlemen, you are to be congratulated, who by a liberal education are now fitting yourselves for leadership of men in this era of magnificent opportunity. And you, gentlemen, are equally to be congratulated, on whom rests the responsibility of preparing men who may help to mold the destinies of our glorious Republic, as she accepts the obligation of the strong to bear the burdens of the weak. God grant to each one enlightenment and strength to remain ever courageously loyal to honor and to right.







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